ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

MAGAZINE

CHI-CHI NWANOKU

September 1993

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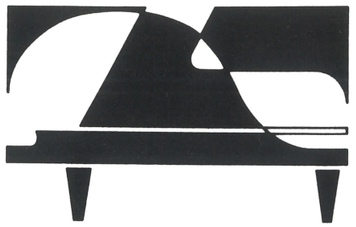

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ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC
MAGAZINE

IN 1970 Vladimir Ashkenazy and Itzhak Perlman were looking for a cellist to form a trio. Friends of theirs recommended an American who had just left Daniel Barenboim's Cleveland Orchestra. Though he was only 24, this young musician had already completed a five year tenure as the Cleveland's first cellist. He was striking out on a solo career and so, with obvious regret, he turned Ashkenazy's invitation down. A few years later, and still not yet 30, the cellist made his British debut with the LSO. He played the Dvorak Concerto, promptly recorded this demanding masterpiece and Ashkenazy was knocking at his door again. "Look, if you don't want a trio, will you just play with me?" Ashkenazy said. "After all, in a piano and cello recital it is the piano which is not so important." This time the cellist said yes and the new duo played Beethoven, Prokofiev and Brahms cello sonatas at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

One critic wrote of the "tiny, dark-eyed pianist next to the huge, red-faced blond man" and the Guardian's Edward Greenfield was moved to write: "It looked at first as though he was going literally to make a meal of his cello, grabbing it to himself as he thrust forward a puckered upper lip. As with Rostropovich, the visual picture is important for when it comes to his playing, sound matches sight. This is certainly the first cello and piano I can ever remember when the cello actually drowned the piano. He will be a welcome visitor next summer."

Since that triumph early in 1975, the huge red-faced blond has become far more than a welcome visitor. He has made England his second home, while playing with just about every major orchestra in the world. Latterly he's become a conductor, too, and he led the Philharmonia at the Academy last November. As conductor/soloist with the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra, he recorded concerti of Haydn, CPE Bach and Mozart. And Ashkenazy's persistence paid off because the erstwhile diffident cellist eventually joined forces with him and Perlman. The trio's recordings of Tchaikovsky and Beethoven have won Grammy awards and they were last heard touring Europe in May. By then the cellist was also being billed as the Royal Academy of Music's next Principal.

In Lynn Harrell the Academy has a new Principal who has been at the centre of the classical mainstream for nearly three decades. He is a uniquely well-connected working musician who knows his way round academia as well. On visiting the Academy a couple of years ago he said: "I walk in here excited at the prospect of going away with as much as I will be giving. As the outsider, I am so thankful that I have the opportunity of coming to the Academy and of working with a set of extraordinary colleagues and young people." Now he's the insider, he's even more welcome and everybody looks forward to an extraordinary future under his direction.

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Music theatre course

THE London Royal Schools' Joint Vocal Faculty has announced its specialist two-year Musical Theatre course to commence in September 1994. This innovative course is for postgraduate singers who wish to develop their vocal and musical skills to a high standard. It will provide a realistic and comprehensive training with today's theatrical needs in mind.

The core of the course is a progressive structure of classes in singing, acting, physical preparation, dance, audition technique and repertoire. There is also a regular programme of specialist classes including extended voice techniques, mime, fight, social and period dance, microphone technique, stage design/lighting.

The creative team is led by Mary Hammond and Mike Ashman, and it draws upon a wide range of working professionals also active in musical theatre. An Advisory Panel of distinguished people from the professional world will keep the course in touch with changing ideas.

Sponsorship

FIRST and foremost amongst those private benefactors and donors whom the Academy must thank is the **Foundation for Sport and Arts,** for its substantial contribution towards the capital costs involved in the redecoration of the Duke's Hall. In due course a commemorative plaque will appear on the wall leading in to the hall. Next we acknowledge gifts from **Mrs Jean Cork, Mr F H Wynne, Mr Mike Abrams, Dynamo Creative Marketing Ltd, Mrs Claire Hunter, the Princess Grace Hospital, the Friends of the Royal Academy of Music, the Edgar Lee Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation, the Kirby Laing Foundation, the Lorence Trust** and followers of the series of recitals at the home of **Martin Summers HonFRAM.**

Lady Davis played an indispensable role in raising funds for the Alexander Technique from individuals including **HRH The Prince of Wales, Sir Georg Solti and Jose Carreras. Sir Colin Davis, John Christopher Adams** and **Gillian Webster** all gave their services for free in connection with a Symphony Orchestra concert in the Duke's Hall on 29 April, the proceeds from which also went to the credit of the Alexander Technique.

Bequests during the past year have been received from the estates of **Dame Eva Turner, Miss Winifred Disney, Mrs E M George, Miss Madeleine Windsor** and **Miss Gwendolin Ayles-Eckhart.** A 1727 Techler violin was left to the Academy by the late **Miss Violet Wallace** and a 1720 Rogeri cello was given to the Academy by a donor whose mother was a student here in the first few years of the century.

Last, but by no means least, the Queen's Birthday Honours awarded an OBE to Adam Johnstone, Chairman of the Broadwood Trust, for his charitable services to the Royal Academy of Music. The Academy is delighted that this recognition has been paid to the single most important benefactor of its 1986 Appeal.

Help!

KATE ELMITT wants to find a copy (piano part only) of the Violin and Piano Sonata in D Minor, Opus 55, by Georg Schumann. She has lost her copy and an advertised performance is getting horribly close. Can anyone help? If so, phone her on 0462-455835.

OBITUARY: Douglas Hopkins

DOUGLAS HOPKINS, who died in 1992, was different! Dedicated to his church music as he was, he could never hide away in the confines of a cathedral close; he was essentially a practical person who, before he took a rehearsal, would be there setting out the chairs and putting up the stands. He could never stand by and watch others. Music was for doers!

All this I discovered as a young teenager when Douglas came to Peterborough at the end of the war. The artistic life of the city was at a low ebb but within a few months things began to happen, rekindled in both cathedral and city with Douglas at the spearhead. Later, working as the city's chief education officer, even more exciting things happened, not least in Festival of Britain Year, 1951. This was due to the vitality of the man who, with the background of chorister and later sub-organist at St Paul's Cathedral, had commuted throughout the war between London and Truro, whence the choristers had been evacuated, keeping the music tradition alive at England's great national symbol. Then he came to Peterborough and breathed new life into the music of cathedral and city.

His move to Canterbury was less happy. The ethos of that cathedral was far less in tune with his personality: he was not sorry to leave it. There was other work to be done, not least in the field of education. Benenden and St Felix, Southwold, were to share his zeal.

All this time he served the Academy, teaching the organ, broadening the minds of so many students who thought that playing the organ was the only thing in the world that mattered, and leading the very practical and often hilarious weekly choir-training classes. As one who knew him probably better than most, as teacher, colleague and friend, more and more I have come to admire and respect his philosophy. He believed that musician must share his gift. A cathedral organist should not be apart from the world – they so often are – but should bear his part in offering the best in daily worship, and should also be out there amongst people of all ages, enabling them to make the most of their skills and enjoyments. I, like so many others, caught that enthusiasm and that breadth and have been greatly the richer for it.

MALCOLM TYLER

Queen's Birthday Honours

- ☐ Life Peer: Baron – Sir Yehudi Menuhin OM, KBE, HonRAM
- ☐ OBE – John Carol Case HonRAM, Adam Johnstone HonFRAM
- ☐ MBE – David Gedge ARAM

Honorary Members of the Royal Academy of Music

- ☐ Patrick Harrild
- ☐ Ian Horsbrugh
- ☐ James Lockhart
- ☐ Owen Murray
- ☐ Itzhak Perlman
- ☐ Curtis Price
- ☐ Patrick Russill
- ☐ Alfred Schnittke
- ☐ Leonard Slatkin

Fellows of the Royal Academy of Music

- ☐ Bernard Gregor-Smith
- ☐ Ian Hobson
- ☐ Monica Huggett
- ☐ Claire Powell
- ☐ David Theodore

Honorary Fellows of the Royal Academy of Music

- ☐ Jack Anderson
- ☐ Michael Hoare
- ☐ Andrew Stewart-Roberts

Deaths

We pay tribute to the memory of the following:

- ☐ Malcolm Macdonald HonRAM, 26th March 1993 (Member of Professorial Staff 1954-83)
- ☐ Arleen Auger HonRAM, 10th June 1993

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, the President of the Academy, entering the Duke's Hall accompanied by the Principal, Sir David Lumsden, on the occasion of the 1993 graduation ceremony.

PHOTO: TOMAS JASKI

New appointments

Dr Kimberly Marshall has been appointed Dean of Postgraduate Studies. Dr Marshall has been Assistant Professor at Stanford University, California since 1986. She won first prize in the St Albans International Organ Competition in 1985 and has an active playing career alongside her work as a scholar and teacher.

Ruth Byrchmore has been appointed Assistant BMus Tutor. She gained the MMus in composition while a student at the Academy and is currently composer-in-residence at Wells Cathedral School where she has continued to develop an active career in composition.

Felix Warnock recently took up the post of Head of Early Music Studies. He is also General Manager of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and this will facilitate the growing link between the Academy and the OAE. Under his leadership it is intended to establish a late 18th-century period-instrument course at the Academy from September 1993.

RAM Club

WELL, WE'VE had a busy year in the RAM Club, supporting many Academy events and holding our own concerts. This hectic programme culminated in June when Lesley Garrett presented an evening of cabaret in the Sir Jack Lyons Theatre. This was a great success, and we hope that it will be possible to arrange a similar event in the future.

Our AGM this year will be held on 21 October at 6pm, after which we will be supporting the Symphony Orchestra concert in the Duke's Hall with Lynn Harrell conducting. The programme will feature works by Bartok and Tchaikovsky, and also a first performance of Paul Patterson's Festivo. It is very appropriate that we will be supporting this concert as Paul Patterson is currently our President Elect, who will be taking over from Joy Mammen later this year. Which brings me around to thanking Joy for all the hard work which she has put into the Club during her time as President, and to hope that she will continue to support us in the future. Another person who must be mentioned is Nigel Clarke, whose continued enthusiasm and support in his role of Honorary Secretary has proved vital to the Club this year.

Many of you will be wondering about the Club dinner which we hope to hold. We will obviously need a great deal of support for an event such as this, and are currently looking into the possibility of holding the dinner in November this year. This should be a wonderful evening, and I will be sending out details as soon as I have them.

One of the main difficulties that I have had this year has been running the day to day business of the Club without an office from which to do so. I am very pleased to announce that Patrick Maddams has very kindly given us the use of a room and telephone on the ground floor from the beginning of the Autumn term! I will therefore be able to answer your calls and reply to your letters much quicker in the future.

One important area that we feel that has been somewhat neglected in the past is to encourage our younger members to support Club functions. Any suggestions for possible future events that would appeal to all age groups would be gladly received!

Another exciting development is the designing of a new Club logo. Sixth form students from Dulwich College submitted a number of ideas to the committee, and the winning design will be used in the near future.

I do hope that members will continue to support Club events, and would like to encourage all of our younger members to come along and join in! Any questions or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact me at the Academy.

JOANNA IVE, RAM CLUB ADMINISTRATOR

A cult of personality

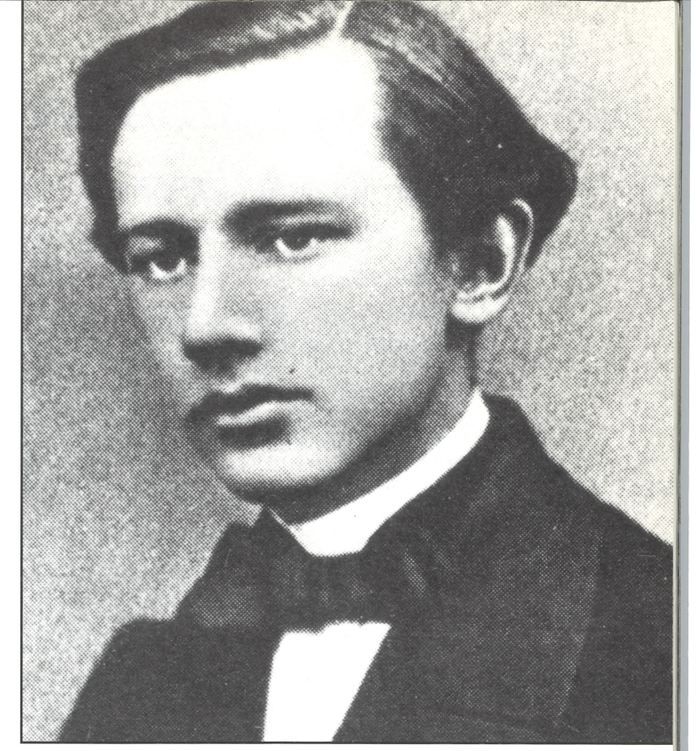
Justin Connolly argues that in the century since Tchaikovsky's death there has been more attention paid to the myths about the man than the truths of his music

THE complex personal attributes of Tchaikovsky the man have sometimes obscured rather than illuminated the work of Tchaikovsky the composer, and the often violent expressiveness of the music has been interpreted rather too much in terms of imagined defects in the character of its creator. This easy equation of life with work rests on a misunderstanding of creative processes, and depends for its plausibility on a very partial view of either dimension of the composer's existence.

For one thing, Tchaikovsky is famous for a mere handful of works: a large part of his total production is ignored, as much by musicians themselves as by the general public. How many string quartets regularly play even one of his three fine works in the medium? How many pianists even think of programming pieces like the splendid Dumka, Op 59, or the very different, but equally interesting Six Pieces on a Single Theme, Op 1. Of his eleven operas, only two are in regular production: of his three piano concertos, two are neglected, and so on. This is not, of course, to claim that some of these pieces are without flaws, or that they are all of an equal significance when compared to his acknowledged masterpieces. But our ignorance of them means that our knowledge of the music is that much less complete, in focusing on a relatively small proportion of his output.

Naturally, there are reasons for this neglect. Tchaikovsky was not only a composer of world stature, writing large-scale works, but like several; of his contemporaries, such as Dvorak and Elgar, he also wrote domestic music, intended for amateur performance. Like them, he showed as much talent in this specialised field as he did in projects of a more artistically ambitious kind, but with the expansion of professional concert-giving, and a corresponding decline in music making at home, much of this part of his work fell into disuse, or figured with decreasing frequency in the programme of professional performers.

Since our experience of the music is thus necessarily limited, it's hardly surprising that the details of his life have also suffered suppression and distortion during the century which has passed since his death. For Tchaikovsky, more than many other great artists, has consistently been the victim of sensation hungry commentators, whose reduction of his life to a string of anecdotes has tended to cloud possible perception of what this particular human being might actually have been like. Even the photographic record of his appearance has been selectively used. How many times have we seen that famous picture from the final months of his life depicting the anguished, doom-laden figure as a suitable case for the Ken Russell treatment? But there also exist other pictures which show to much better effect his natural charm and dignity; they reveal a personality of exceptional depth and integrity, not some dismal stereotype from the school of biography which gives us such compelling insights as Mozart the Lout, Beethoven the Bear, Wagner the Sensualist, and so on. There seems to be an ugly element of Schadenfreude in the supposed discovery that those who create great works of art are no less fallible than those who don't; the idiotic idea that artists ought necessarily to be more virtuous than other people goes right back to Plato and his dream of a philosopher-king, but it's none the less a complete fantasy for all that. In real life creators are much more likely to be Faustian beings, all too well aware of the price to be paid for the privilege of exercising talent under public scrutiny.



Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky as a young man. Myth-mongers have used the photographic record of his appearance selectively. The more usual view of him is as an anguished and doom-laden figure ready to step into a Ken Russell-style dramatisation.

With the wholly honourable exception of David Brown, whose devotion to uncovering as much as possible of the truth about the composer is in stark contrast to their taste for mythomania, most of Tchaikovsky's biographers tend to express disapproval of the composer as a person. This censorious attitude has often been fuelled by their reading of his diaries and letters, where he shows a singular honesty in recording disparaging comments about his own character and achievement: judgements which are anything but self-serving or indulgent. Excited by his frankness, they often fall into the serious error of concluding that because he had made a particular observation about himself, it must for that reason be objectively true. In actual fact, such remarks were often no more than mild exaggerations quite typical of those who are deeply critical of themselves.

Tchaikovsky's dynamism is the true link between the man and the music

Tchaikovsky's letters to his brother Modest and his diaries themselves are fascinating. His lively sense of the ridiculous and his penetrating intelligence are everywhere evident. For instance, what he says about the problems of composition ought to be read by everyone with any interest in the subject: who would not dream of having a lesson from someone of his stature? And yet the dream can very nearly become a reality as we read his words; it's almost as if we are in his actual presence, so vividly does he convey his thoughts.

This dynamism is the true link between the man and the music. His everyday experience, painful though it may be to discuss, is really tangential to our appreciation of the work, if only because the music itself functions as a compensation for it in our minds as well as perhaps, in his own. A century after his mysterious death, some of it is still as much played and enjoyed as it ever was. Superior persons who, while they dared, pretended to despise its popularity, have long been put to flight, so that now it is hard for us to remember that when this music first appeared, it won scant support from anyone. The Russian nationalists believed its eclecticism of style to be a betrayal of principle; and the German domination of musical culture was so complete that the music and its composer were brutally attacked for daring to differ from established norms. Like all truly original art, it had to win its way to acceptance: it did this so completely that we are now in danger of underestimating its brilliance of invention, its elegance, its sheer musicality. Whatever the difficulties of its creator's life, the music's vitality of spirit ensures that, if the world should endure it will continue to give as much pleasure during the next hundred years as it has already done for more than a century.

Justin Connolly is Professor in the Composition and Contemporary Music department, with special responsibility for Advanced Orchestration

All change

Peter James assesses the impact Sir David Lumsden has made during his eleven-year tenure as Principal of the Royal Academy of Music

DAVID LUMSDEN'S first report to the Academy's Governing Body in 1982 sums up his philosophy: "While I am conscious of the traditions of the Academy, and I shall seek to preserve and enhance these, I am even more conscious of the inevitability of change and the need for adaptation to the foreseeable needs of the future. I see change, and always have, as natural, necessary, even welcome; not as a threat to or a criticism of the past".

One of his first tasks at the Academy was to oversee the renovation and development of the building. With help from his tireless Administrator, John Bliss, the Academy was refurbished from top to bottom (literally: they both knew that if a start were made at ground-floor level the top would probably never be reached). Electronic studios, more practice rooms, percussion facilities, a recital room – an, of course, the magnificently refurbished Duke's Hall – all bear testimony to David's energy, not to mention a knack of fund-raising.

The central pillar of David's strategy at the Academy has been its elevation to an institution of performing excellence at an international level; the outcry which greeted the Pursuit of Excellence submission in 1985-6 convinced him of the rightness of this strategy. Of course there were difficult consequences: a reduction of student numbers from 630 to 470, new teaching methods and a redistribution of student numbers by instrument or voice all meant redundancies and contractual reductions – but, equally, the opportunity was created to develop important new areas of work. In the last five years the number of overseas students has risen dramatically and has helped to raise the international profile of the Academy.

The need for enhanced funding to enable the Academy to compete at a truly international level led, perhaps inevitably, to Lord Gowrie's Committee of Enquiry (1990) into three of London's music colleges. The outcome, while not (yet?) resulting in the formation of a single major conservatoire, has been that the Academy and its erstwhile rival, the Royal College of Music, have begun to embark on important collaborative ventures. The first such collaboration is the London Royal Schools' Vocal Faculty, which holds out great hopes for the future, even in its first year. Now attention is turning to early music, an area which David has always cared about passionately.

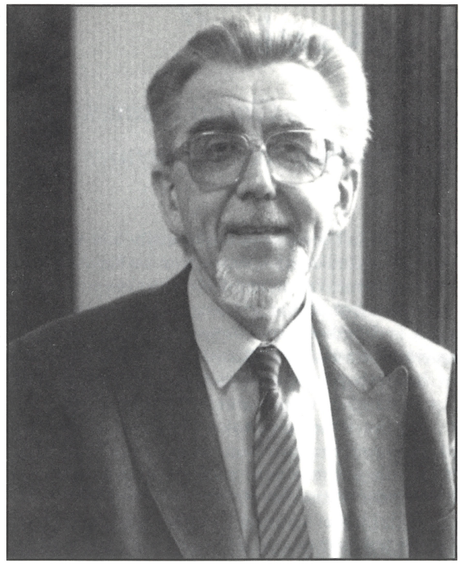
He also has strong views about what many see as a polarisation between university music departments and music colleges. "A thinking musician is a better performer" has always been his dictum and the opportunity to link with King's College, London, was one which he seized with characteristic vigour. The first outcome was the BMus Course; now two years old, this radically re-cast curriculum for all Academy undergraduates is living up to its aim to be one of the most important developments in British music education this century. Alongside this, specialist programmes have been introduced in jazz, commercial music and church music, and plans are under discussion to introduce purpose-designed higher degrees for performers, again in association with King's.

Contemporary music has been a special feature of the Academy's life for the past decade, highlighted by annual festivals featuring the music of an internationally recognised composer in his presence – a remarkable opportunity and experience for students to work with artists of the calibre of Lutoslawski, Tippett, Penderecki, Messiaen, Henze, Berio, Elliott Carter and, most recently, an impressive number of composers who trained at the Academy. Alongside all this, he introduced the much derided (but now widely imitated) International Chairs. Anne-Sophie Mutter, Lynn Harrell, Hans Werner Henze, Sir Colin Davis, Robert Tear, Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich and Andras Schiff have all brought external dimensions to the Academy's work. Members of the Amadeus Quartet have provided yet another inspirational experience in the field of chamber music.

Little of this could have been achieved without the team of like-minded people which David so skilfully assembled around him: course tutors, heads of study and members of the directorate responsible for administration, finance, public relations, alumni contacts and fund-raising. But above all, of course, the quality of work depends on the expertise and commitment of teaching and administrative staff. David understood this well, and he has always valued the enormous commitment of his colleagues.

It continues to be something of a surprise to those of us who have been closely associated with his contribution to the Academy to realise that he has always had many outside professional interests to occupy him. Scottish Opera, the Royal College of Organists and the National Youth Orchestra are just three of the more significant areas to which he has devoted much time and energy. It is a particular pleasure to know that these other areas are represented at the farewell concert. He has had several careers, all characterised by a burning commitment – as organist and harpsichordist, conductor and choir trainer (cathedral music played an important part in his life at Southwell and New College), stimulating and demanding teacher ("I expect the students do the work, not me"), scholar and Principal (twice). It is quite impossible to imagine that Sir David's new life will be any less busy or inspirational than the old one. But one thing is certain: his influence will remain in those areas and with those people with whom he has been associated over a uniquely distinguished career.

Peter James is the Warden of the Royal Academy of Music



Sir David Lumsden: "I am conscious of the inevitability of change and the need for adaptation. I see change as natural, necessary, even welcome: not as a threat or a criticism of the past."

PHOTO: PILAR FERNANDEZ

Sir David Lumsden's CV

1948-51:	Organ scholar, Selwyn College, Cambridge
1955:	MA
1957:	DPhil
1951-53:	Assistant Organist, St John's College, Cambridge
1954-56:	Organist and Choirmaster, St Mary's, Nottingham
1954-59:	Founder and Conductor, Nottingham Bach Society
1956-59:	Rector Chori, Southwell Minster
1956-61:	Professor of Harmony, RAM
1958-59:	Director of Music, Keele University
1959-76:	Fellow and Organist, New College, Oxford, and Lecturer in the Faculty of Music, Oxford University
1964-76:	Organist, Sheldonian Theatre
1966-68:	President: Incorporated Society of Organists
1967:	Hugh Porter Lecturer, Union Theological Seminary, New York
1970-73:	Honorary Editor, Church Music Society
1972-75:	Harpsichordist to London Virtuosi
1974-75:	Visiting Professor, Yale University
1976-82:	Principal, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow
1977-80:	Conductor, BBC Scottish Singers
1977-83:	Member of Board: Scottish Opera
1982-93:	Principal, Royal Academy of Music
1983-88:	Member of Board: ENO
1984-85:	President: ISM
1985:	Knighted
1985:	Chairman: NYO
1985-89:	Chairman: Early Music Society
1986-88:	President: RCO

A former pupil writes...

IN 1971 I attended the organ scholarship trials at New College, Oxford. I enthusiastically bounced my way (so I suppose) through Dieu parmi nous, the brilliant conclusion of Messiaen's nine-movement cycle of 1935, La Nativité du Seigneur. I rejoiced, I know, in Messiaen's unabashed celebration of theological certainty – the incarnate presence of God amongst humankind, in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ. I revelled in the originality and colour of his harmony, derived from his own logical modal system. I exulted in his Dionysiac transformation of the French organ toccata style and the sensational piling of Ossa upon Pelion in the final chord sequence. I was also dimly aware that this was organ music which had (thank God) stepped outside the ghetto of the organ loft and that commanded the respect of the wider musical world.

Whether the now familiar eminence noir, then behind me as I played, sensed all this, I doubt. But I'm sure he knew I was inordinately pleased with myself. Come the interview in his rooms an hour later, he had me cornered – like a rabbit in headlights – with a characteristic Lumsden question: "What do you think, looking at their organ music, that Messiaen has in common with Couperin?"

I remember being conscious of the eyebrows, the precipice of forehead and hair (the beard arrived a year or so later, I think), but it was the eyes that rivetted one. What on earth could there be in common between my modern hero and Bach's great French contemporary? At least I had already learnt some Couperin. I ventured a few naive ideas. They were enough to transform interrogation into dialogue as DL's enthusiasm developed an irresistible energy, an almost physical momentum. Sir David's Academy colleagues have all experienced this phenomenon in strategic and other discussions! At New College, tutorials and performances of his musical gods – Byrd, Purcell, Bach and Mozart – were regularly, but never routinely, carried away on a similar inspirational tide.

The conversation concluded with an entirely typical Lumsden preoccupation (and with characteristic emphases):

"So – do you perform Couperin and Messiaen in the same way?"

(Pause). "No."

"How do you know how to perform them?"

(Longer pause, then limply…)

"By knowing the style."

"Style! Exactly. And for that it's vital that you're informed. Instinct and flair are essential but not enough by themselves."

Instinct, flair, informed musicianship, style – the hallmarks of Lumsden the tutor and performer in his New College days and the leitmotiven of the vision that has charted the Academy's course over the past decade.

PATRICK RUSSILL

Patrick Russill is Director of Church Music at the Royal Academy of Music

"Unspoken secret..."

...is a fine phrase to describe music. It popped up when Chi-chi Nwanoku was interviewed by Paul Fisher. Malcolm Crowthers took the pictures

PROFESSIONAL musicians are unique in that most chose their career during childhood. Talent and a determination to practise rather than watch telly mark musicians out from their school mates, and the brightest and the best are on course for the job they want before others have even picked their GCSE subjects. The double bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku is an exception.

She was a sporty rather than a cerebral adolescent and never even played a stringed instrument until her late teens. True, she'd got obsessed with 12-bar blues when she was eight and persuaded her unmusical parents to buy her a piano. During her teens she trotted through the piano grades but this small effort played second string to athletics. The main thing which makes Chi-chi Nwanoku a one-off is that she's the only top flight musician to be an ex-Olympian. She was about to be a famous sprinter until suffering a drastic knee injury during a football game. One day she was in the British team and due to go to the Montreal Olympics and the next...

Well, she took up smoking in hospital. She's still a determined smoker of roll-ups and says: "I thought my body is a wreck so I might as well finish it off now." Once out of hospital her school teachers (every Nwanoku interview has her thanking her headmistress Joan Atkinson and the Kendrick Girls' School head of music John Dussek) suggested she could be a musician. At nearly 18, her prospects weren't good. She was never going to be another Ashkenazy, so her teachers steered her away from the piano towards the double bass because a) the school had one its music cupboard and b) they reckoned that a skill in a *really* unpopular orchestral instrument might give her another kind of performing future.

They were right... and they must have known their pupil had the guts to make a traumatic career change. Nwanoku left home in Reading to study the double bass at Cambridge Technical College and from there she went to the Royal Academy of Music. "To this day, I'm surprised I was accepted. They must have liked me for my potential and I soaked up everything like a sponge." Like Evelyn Glennie, another of the Academy's high achieving backrow graduates, Nwanoku remembers feeling isolated as a student. "I only saw the other musicians at the twice weekly orchestral rehearsals and everyone else seemed to be in quartets and ensembles. I managed to organise one Trout Quintet in four years." Now she's on an EMI Trout recording with Hausmusik.

She didn't accept the traditionally low status of the bass and rejected advice, given by her Academy teachers John Walton and Robin McGee, to become an orchestral player. "The greatest double bass work is chamber music," she says, mentioning her recent performance of Bottesini's Grande Concerto in quattro tempi at the Sheldonian. "It's an entertaining showdown piece. Paganini really."

By the time Nwanoku graduated she was playing contemporary music with the Endymion Ensemble and she won a scholarship to study in Italy under Petracchi. Her next career change was one she chose. Instead of going for a job in an orchestral engine room, she was attracted to chamber ensembles and from there into early music and authenticity. "I haven't done what I trained to do," Nwanoku says. "Since leaving the Academy I've done nothing but chamber music and chamber orchestras and over the last half dozen years I've been absorbed in the period music scene."

Chi-chi Nwanoku and her Amati double bass:

Now she's principal bassist with John Eliot Gardner's Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a regular with Hausmusik. Recently she returned to contemporary work and recorded Alexander Goehr's Sing Ariel conducted by Oliver Knussen. Goehr wrote a fearsome bass cadenza with her in mind and she's clearly in big demand.

"My natural instinct is to play with the rhythm," is the way she assesses her greatest strength as a player... you'd expect nothing less from an ex-princess of boogie-woogie. "In rehearsal you can bet it's always me you're going to hear before the rest because I react to physical movement. You've got to stay with the beat and I like to lead where I can." She also plays to her strengths. "I love jazz and I hear phrases when I think: that was inevitable, I'd do it like that. But I'd freeze because I've been too conditioned by learning the notes." The sense of rhythm and the classical musician's ability to learn the notes... call it intuition and intellect... mean her strings take in moisture more quickly than metal-covered strings. They react, they shrink, they stretch, they crack." Active verbs which could describe her. The disappointed schoolgirl who stumbled into playing the most physically difficult of instruments uses physicality as her highest form of praise. Her five year old son escaped from his nanny and shinned onto a kitchen counter to get a biscuit. "Jacob's bright and he's physically precocious," said the fond mother. "Watch how he uses himself."

Of more musical significance is her assessment of Simon Rattle. "When Simon is giving a lead," Nwanoku says, "I feel he's physically playing the instrument with me. He's acting it without an instrument in his hand and I'm emulating what he's playing. He communicates on many levels: when people aren't open enough to absorb what he wants, then he's very articulate. It doesn't matter which section of the orchestra he's talking to, it's

Words versus music. It's a conflict felt by many musicians who feel more clumsy speaking than playing. This is because words are less pure than music, but it's odd that the fluent Nwanoku should make such a meal of the difference

Filofax is a wadge of Biroed dates. Figaro with the OAE in Germany, France, Portugal and a recording at the QEH. Something educational on TV with Joanna MacGregor and last Spring she turned down an American tour with Melvyn Tan. That was due to the pressures of separating from her husband and looking after two young children.

Will that damage your career?

The question earned a hard stare from frightening blue eyes. "Who's to know? The phone still rings and I'm happy with my workload. Maybe, without children, I'd have concentrated on solo work but the repertoire is very limited. Who knows?"

She's absolutely definite about authentic instruments. She plays an Amati made in 1631 and won't have it that its slithering out of tune is anything less than a price worth paying. "Gut

"Gut strings take in moisture, they react..."

interesting what he's saying. Everyone listens. Usually musicians chat among themselves if the conductor isn't speaking to their section. Somebody asked me what a conductor is for and I told them it is somebody playing the orchestra. You have to be played by the conductor, although there's still an unspoken secret about a good performance."

Here is a perfect description of what a musician wants from a conductor and a good definition of the "unspoken secret" of orchestral music making. It is taken verbatim from the tape and, minutes later, when I asked if she'd ever thought of conducting, she replied: "Yes. My trouble is that I'm not articulate enough and often find I can't express myself properly. I do that when I'm playing." In another image of music as something akin to speech, she'd said: "A lot of performers concentrate too much on the notes and forget what they're trying to say."

Words versus music. It's a conflict felt by many musicians who, though they're usually more fluent

"There's an unspoken secret about a good performance… My trouble is that I'm not articulate enough and often find I can't express myself properly. I do that when I'm playing."
– Chi-Chi Nwanoku

than the man on the Clapham omnibus, nonetheless feel more clumsy speaking than playing. This is, I suppose, because words are less pure than music, but it's odd that the fluent Nwanoku should make such a meal of the difference. Odder still that she should ask if what she was saying was worth repeating in an article when she quite clearly doesn't always value spoken articulacy in others. Talking of her time with Petracchi – again in proper sentences which didn't need any ums and ahs edited out – she said: "Franco was able to describe things to me with his playing. His English was terrible and my Italian non-existent but it didn't matter. We worked on technical things… how to make that line sing, how to do a string crossing in phrase and still sound rubato, how to use different parts of the bow. He was a man who knew about all the subtleties and he opened up the colour and variety that's possible in the double bass. He didn't hold with a ploddy attitude of just going whack, whack, whack."

Whack, whack, whack. She hit her kitchen table as she recalled the old Italian who dispelled any lingering inferiority she might have felt about her unwieldy instrument. Talking to her would convince anybody that the bass really isn't an orchestral filler. Her crisp answers, given against a backdrop of the demands of a three and a five year old, made her a memorable interviewee and were far more interesting than the peculiar start to her career, or her colour. "Who'd have thought I'd have a blonde daughter?" was the nearest she got to talking about that. "The subject of colour [her father is Nigerian, her mother Irish] only comes up when I'm being interviewed," she is quoted as saying in another interview. Fair enough. She had to fix the children's lunch and there'd been too much else to talk about.

"…they shrink, they stretch, they crack."

Making a scene

A four page spectacular in which the film score writer Ian Hughes reveals the tricks of his pressurised trade during the making of The Lady Vanishes

WHAT IS IT that makes a composer want to write for television or film? What is it that fires this ambition? Despite harbouring such desires myself I find it almost impossible to explain. In this day and age, there is hardly ever the budget to do the job as you would wish let alone enough left over for personal financial reward; writing a film score must be akin to giving birth, except the gestation period is invariably little more than three weeks; if you're unlucky, you may be working with a director who seems to be speaking Venutian when it comes to expressing his musical intentions and then you find the cue that you're most proud of has ended its life on the dubbing room floor. At the end of it all however, even if the BAFTA or Oscar nomination has eluded you once more, you pick yourself up, dust yourself down and start all over again.

The road that runs between the commission and the award ceremony is a tricky one with many obstacles to overcome. Your ability to compose an appropriate musical cue is almost secondary to the need for great patience and diplomacy. Allow me to point out a few landmarks on the way and then we'll take a look at how to approach a specific musical cue to picture.

Whereas the director may have had six months to shoot the film, the composer rarely gets more than about three weeks to write, orchestrate, copy and record

Your journey invariably starts with a phone call, and if you're really lucky the job in question is a feature film. Act cool, and mumble something about checking your availability in your diary, whilst at the same time, suppressing a yelp of unrestrained glee. The blank pages almost give you snow blindness but you return to the phone and say that you can just about fit them in between projects for Spielberg and Branagh. Remember the short-lived period of elation that follows because it won't last long and you may need to reflect on it a week or two later during your third night without sleep.

Your first knock usually comes about now when you're told that although the producers would have liked to employ the LSO to record the music the budget won't allow it so can you make your synthesizer sound like a full orchestra. Let's assume for the moment, however, that you're on a roll and fortune has smiled on you. You're given an orchestra to play with but…wait for it! wait for it! It's in Budapest! How's your Hungarian? This production company is obviously subscribing to the view, prevalent at the moment, that because musicians abroad are cheaper to employ it is therefore more cost effective to do so. When will they learn?

So, the music budget has been discussed, you've done your deal and it's now time to meet the director. Again, if you're lucky, as I have been, you may be working with a director who appreciates the effect music can have on his film and who can express himself lucidly and intelligently. (There are some who are intimidated by music, or else regard it as an evil necessity.) First and foremost, you should sit down together, usually in an editing suite, and view the film scene by scene discussing where music should go, how long the cue should be, and most importantly, what it should try to achieve. This process is called 'spotting'.

Having done this, you'll be given the final cut version of the film on video cassette with a visual time code so that it is possible to plan your music exactly to fit the action. On large-scale productions you will work closely with the music editor who will advise you of any changes that might have occurred since your initial meeting and keep you informed about sound effects that may influence the way you write or orchestrate your cues.

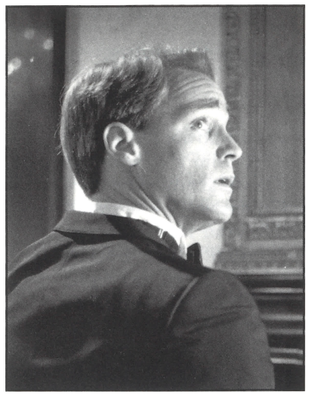
Having written the cues in sketch form, the next stage is the orchestration. Most films require the services of one or more orchestrators independent of the composer. This is sometimes because of the composer's own lack of ability in this field, but more often than not due to the lack of time available. The creative process at this level is something akin to a production line. As each cue is composed, it is passed to the orchestrator; as each cue is orchestrated it is passed to the copyist. Eventually it ends up on the music stands and you may find yourself perched on a podium in front of an orchestra and a screen ready to conduct the first cue.

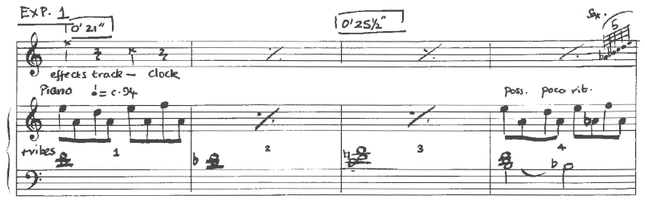
Necessarily, music is one of the last ingredients to be added, and whereas the director may have had six months to shoot the movie, the composer rarely gets more than about three weeks to write, orchestrate, copy and record the music, often in the knowledge that a preview theatre has already been booked to show the finished film. That feeling of elation I mentioned earlier now turns to panic as you realise that it's down to you to deliver the goods. Despite the fact that you know there is going to be a studio full of musicians waiting to play the music you haven't written yet, you will prevaricate and find any excuse not to sit down and put pencil to paper. Eventually you realise that you can delay the moment no longer and must write something. You watch the scene over and over again, you doodle with your pencil or at the keyboard and eventually a theme starts to emerge. The scene in question concerns a man standing by the fireplace in a drawing room of an impressive house… ⇨

Ian Hughes studied piano, percussion, composition and conducting at the RAM from 1976-79. Since leaving he has won various prizes and awards for both orchestration and composition and was also selected as one of four finalists in last year's Donatella Flick Conducting Competition. He divides his time between writing and conducting and is currently composing the score for an animated film called the Mousehole Cat. Earlier this year he was awarded the ARAM

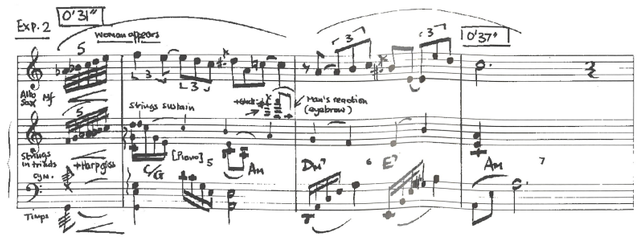
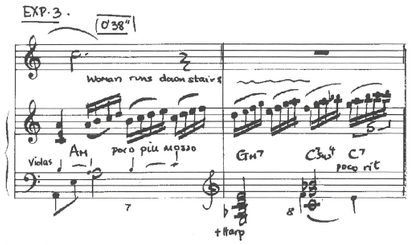
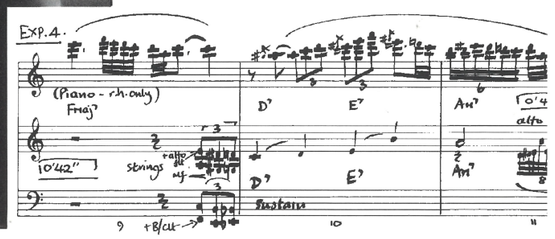
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER: PETER LYNES
STUDIO PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CORIO
WORDS: IAN HUGHES

A story in words, pictures and music

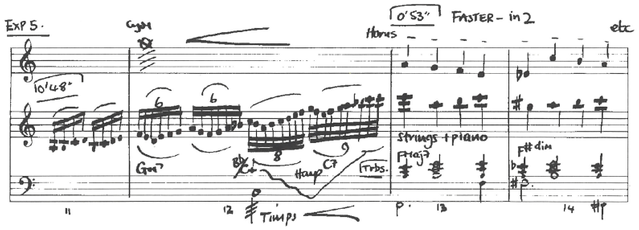




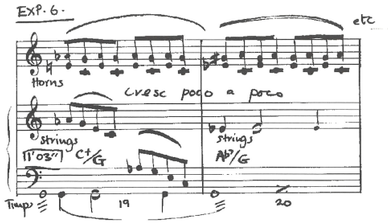
Dinner is over and the hostess has left the room supposedly to fix a drink. There is an air of expectancy and you know that a grandfather clock ticks softly in the background, so let's use that to determine the meter of the music.

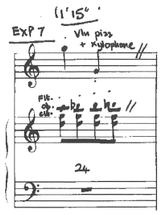
The man's attention is drawn to the top of the stairs where his hostess is standing, not with the drink, but provocatively dressed in a negligé. The music now needs to surge as it reflects his emotional response. it is essential now to be thinking not just of musical phrases but colours, and whether you will be doing the orchestration or not, make notes on your sketches as to what you want to hear. There's nothing sexier than an alto sax cushioned by strings.

The movie is The Lady Vanishes, a promotional film for the British Film Industry. An element of pastiche has been required to handle the scene. This, like the scores to the films Airplane and Police Academy, is an absolute gift for the composer because it allows an indulgence in high quality corn. "I write music," says Ian Hughes, "that I would never have the effrontery to produce under normal circumstances." The actors are Judy Trott and Jeff Harding. The film was directed by Barry Matthews, produced by Philip Measure and Sharon Keenan. The recording was funded by the Musicians' Union

The Lady pauses for a moment before hurrying down the stairs towards him, and the level of mutual expectancy can be maintained in the piano writing.

The man and woman embrace, but the orchestration, whilst still maintaining the tension, must subside momentarily to allow the dialogue through, so the piano meanders seductively around the theme: The music swells again as their embrace becomes more and more passionate and they stumble towards the sofa. For reasons that will become apparent, an unashamedly romantic theme is appropriate here as they struggle evermore impatiently with each others' clothing, piano and strings soar in the background, supported by a counter melody and throbbing rhythm on the horns and trombones.

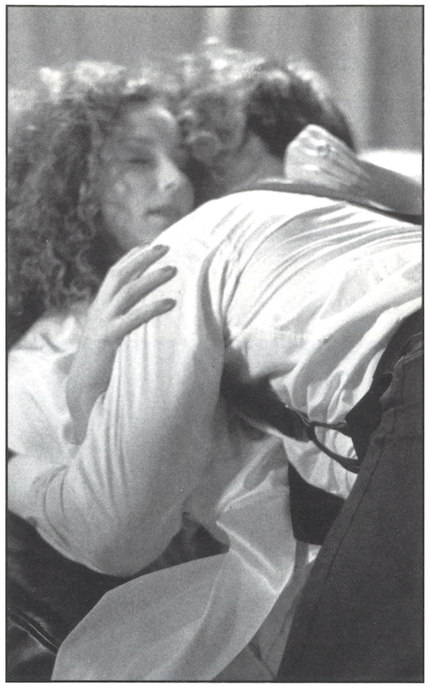
As their urgency reaches fever pitch so must the music with a hint of Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet in the horns perhaps?



MUSICUS INTERRUPTUS



Unfortunately, the music stops abruptly as their lovemaking is interrupted. The actress, now out of character, refuses to go on with the scene because the film's backers have pulled out and they have run out of money. "That's enough!" she cries…

Our hero's expectations are dashed, his desires deflated, and the full orchestra, on cue, ad libs a 'crumble'.



The film music conductor is a dying breed these days as many composers attempt the job for themselves, perhaps for financial reasons, perhaps for reasons of ego or perhaps because they really have a flair for it; although in my experience this is rare. Conducting music to picture is a difficult and precise art and one that should not be underestimated. Another point in favour of a composer not conducting his own music is that he can maintain an overview from the control room and often a great deal of time is saved. The end of the process as far as the composer is concerned is the final dub at which the completed music cues are laid alongside the dialogue and effects tracks and synchronised to the picture (see above) in exactly the right places at exactly the right levels. Your job is done and you can go home and sleep for a week! All you can do now is hope the film is a success when it hits the big screen. If it isn't, it's not your fault, and if it is, who will have noticed the music anyway? So when and if the phone rings next time, are you seriously going to put yourself through it all again? Of course you will.

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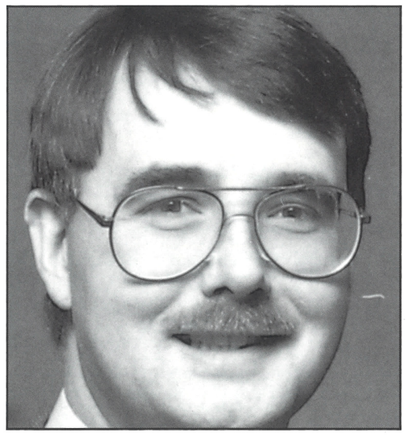
The Society for the Promotion of New Music: 50 years young

The Society for the Promotion of New Music was founded in 1943. Richard Steele and Michael Gorodecki commemorate a half century of music promotion

AT A TIME when funding is in short supply and many of the support services that have nurtured the development of British music are under threat, it is worth remembering that the main reasons for the Society for the Promotion of New Music's existence have remained since the SPNM, as it is always known, was founded in 1943. The Society was formed and still exists to give composers with outstanding talent a public forum through which their work can be brought to the attention of the general public, arts promoters and publishers.

Although SPNM performances have never guaranteed that a composer will be published, a series of such performances over a few years does give a composer valuable exposure and enable his or her output to be assessed by publishers and other interested parties. A short roll-call of composers performed by the SPNM provides ample illustration: Dame Elizabeth Maconchy, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, David Bedford, Richard Rodney Bennett, John Casken, Brian Ferneyhough, Alexander Goehr, Nicola LeFanu, Elisabeth Lutyens, James MacMillan, Steve Martland, Benedict Mason, David Matthews, Nicholas Maw, Paul Patterson, John Tavener, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Trevor Wishart and James Wood. The Academy is well represented!



Richard Steele, the Executive Director of the SPNM, studied organ at the Royal Academy of Music with Douglas Hawkridge. He took a teaching certificate at Queens' College, Cambridge and then taught for 11 years, during which he was Director of Music at Loretto (1979-82) and Queenswood Schools (1982-7). Co-founder with Iain Ledingham of the Amersham Festival of Music of which he was Chairman between 1982-7, he took an MA in Arts Administration at the City University in 1987-8. He became Administrator of the SPNM and the ISCM British Section in September 1988 and was appointed to his present job in July 1992.

In recent years there has been considerable diversification in the type of project the SPNM has promoted. Besides the promotion of Showcase Concerts and workshops, successive Programme Directors have instituted major projects such as the Music and Video collaboration with Central St Martin's College of Art in March 1991; the Composers Forum on Microtonality in December 1991 which led to the setting up of the Microtonal Festivals at the Barbican in March 1992 and 1993; Sound in Space, the collaboration between composers and architects at the Bath Festival in May 1992; and the Priaulx Rainier Youth String Orchestras project at Christ Church Spitalfields in March 1993 for which four composers wrote pieces for youth string orchestras.

Over the years, the SPNM has also evolved into a major support organisation for composers with the in-house production of the monthly brochure New:Notes, mailed to 2,850 music lovers and arts organisations, detailing forthcoming contemporary music events; the administration of the British section of the International Society for Contemporary Music; and the continuing close links with many other music organisations, notably Sonic Arts Network and the British Music Information Centre.

If there was one premise I learnt from the Contemporary Music class with Paul Patterson in 1973-74 during the final year of my course at the Academy, it was that composers and not performers are the central life-force of our musical heritage. Whatever the social, financial or political climate, composers just keep on producing pieces. During my five years at the SPNM, I have helped organise the performance of more than 240 new pieces in concerts, workshops and residential forums all over Britain (including four workshops at the Academy) and in Europe, including the Society's 50th Anniversary celebrations in London last March when 34 new pieces were performed in eight separate events over six days.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the SPNM lies in the many qualified musicians who serve on the committees, selection panels and advisory boards, giving of their time most generously and without payment to provide opportunities for composers at the beginning of their professional careers. This loyal support has enabled the SPNM to run for the last ten years on two full-time members and one part-time member of staff at a time when its activities and turnover have more than doubled.

A COMPOSER'S activities are peculiarly solitary. Even after you have spent many hours of isolation during the composition process, a traditionally notated piece still remains in a kind of potential state of black and white. And the situation is particularly acute for composers in the early period of their careers, still waiting for the flood of requests (that may never come!), and yet not even confident that what they have produced will really work.

The role, then, of the Society for the Promotion of New Music is really crucial in easing that passage between uncertainty and knowledge through the relative informality of workshops, as well as providing a higher public platform in its sponsorship of concerts.

In the testing ground of the workshop I discovered as much what not to do, as what actually worked – especially not to enthusiastically throw everything into a texture I possibly could. The result was less than nothing! But in a constructive atmosphere those failures were an essential part of learning, and have led to positive practical knowledge. There are also hazards in the workshop situation, especially lack of time, and the difficulty in persuading the performers to prepare properly in advance, so the composer can really know it's his or her fault! But attitudes seem to be changing for the better, and in these streamlined times when achievement only seems to be measured in league tables, such a place of experiment has to be supported even more vigorously.

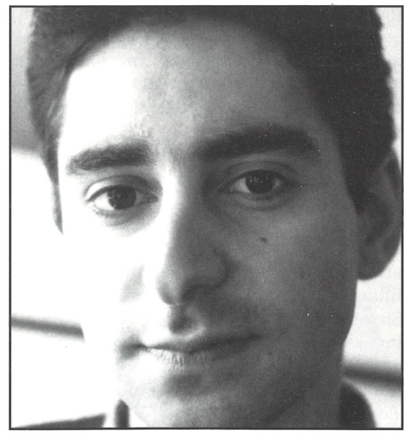
The SPNM puts on as many as 40 or 50 pieces per annum shared between concerts and workshops. The selection of these pieces, taken from the total entry of an average 400 pieces devolves onto that Kafkaesque-sounding body, the Selection Panel, together, in the past five years with the Programme Director, who makes the final overall decision.

In the selection process the spectres of subjective taste and unconscious bias inevitably lurk, yet clearly the SPNM must try to represent the widest possible range of styles and techniques. The final decision also inevitably depends upon the practical logistics of placing pieces in suitable groups to fit with events and performers. But the introduction this year of anonymous submissions, and the continuing emphasis on regional events, specifically for composers from the region, seem to me two positive moves in the direction of greater fairness.

The idea, moreover, of having a Programme Director, has been instrumental in giving the SPNM's activities a greater focus, particularly through specific projects and specialised composers' forums. I hope these developments may gain further momentum in years to come, as also the move towards greater international exchange of composers, music and ideas. Not that this is a new suggestion in the context of the Society – Hans Keller, for example, was a great advocate of such activities in the sixties. But in the nineties the positive recognition of difference, and the stimulation of foreign ideas for one's own work, in the field of composition as much as anywhere, has never seemed more urgent, nor indeed more possible.

Let's trust that the SPNM will be given the ever greater support it needs and deserves for such enterprises over the next 50 years. An above all, to allow it to continue to support, as it has done for me, those difficult, yet vital, formative stages of a composer's career.

SPNM, Francis House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DE; Tel: 071-828 9696; Fax: 071-931 9928



The composer Michael Gorodecki (formerly Michael Zev Gordon) studied composition and oboe at the Royal Academy of Music where his teachers were Roger Steptoe and Celia Nicklin respectively. His undergraduate studies in music were at King's College, Cambridge, where he later studied for an MPhil on Debussy under Alexander Goehr. Having taken composition at Cambridge with Robin Holloway he moved to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he studied with Oliver Knussen. Subsequently, between 19889 and 1990, he studied composition on the continent, first with France Donatoni in Rome and at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena and then with Louis Andriessen in The Hague.

A growth industry

The Alexander Technique has been vital to many musicians. Jessica Duchen traces its history and reveals how the technique became an integral part of the Academy's curriculum… and its second most popular course

IF YOU have ever felt that playing a musical instrument feels more uncomfortable than it ought to – or, indeed, lifting a hairdryer or sitting down and getting up again – and if you suffer aches, pains or just the tension which can cause them, then the Alexander Technique may be for you. But even more, it is for anyone who wants to avoid all of the above.

Often lumped awkwardly together with homeopathy, reflexology, aromatherapy and so on as alternative medicine, the Alexander Technique differs in that it is really a form of re-education. It does not set out to treat and relieve an illness or malfunction, rather it is a matter of retraining both body and mind to eliminate the bad muscular habits that most of us have acquired since we first bent over a desk at school: curving the spine, tensing the neck, crossing the legs and generally assuming postures which are motivated by tension and only generate more of the same. A few examples of physical problems which can result are tennis elbow, back pain, frozen joints or muscles and headaches. With the crazy pace of modern living, especially in London, stress and tension-related ailments are on the increase; the good news is that there is a commensurate amount of interest in relieving the problems and pulling them out by the roots: 'Bad use'.

The Alexander Technique has a particular relevance for musicians, who suffer from more than their fair share of these difficulties. Think about how unnatural it can seem to play a violin- lifting and holding an instrument to the left of your chin and co-ordinating fingering and bowing. Or even lifting a flute, which again requires a lopsided hold. Singers need to lift nothing but their own bodies, but, as the Technique helps to free up the breathing and the throat, the benefits for them are immeasurable. Most instrumentalists can find the Technique helpful. The rest of the woodwind and brass can find the breathing aspects helpful and pianists and organists find back problems eased and co-ordination improved, as do percussionists.

Lois Phillips set up the first Alexander Technique course at the Royal Academy of Music in 1984. At first there were five teachers, each working one-to-one with students for up to six hours a week; now there are seven, working about 30 hours a week both with individuals and small groups. Students are given information about the course at the beginning of the year and can choose to make a commitment to it. According to Dorothea Magonet, one of the Alexander teachers at the Academy, it is now the Academy's second most popular course.

Dorothea Magonet, who teaches Alexander Technique at the Academy, explains some of the effects for singers and instrumentalists: 'First of all, I think you have a greater awareness of where things are in the body – you'd be amazed at what different ideas there are of where the diaphragm is, for instance, and how it works! I think once that falls into place in your mind then you can use yourself quite differently, with much less strain and stress, particularly on the vocal chords, and your breathing control is much easier. Many singers produce extreme tensions in their lower back and in their neck and abdomen, and force the voice that can cause skeletal problems very early on. Any downward pull or push will interfere with voice production. It's very rewarding for us to work with singers because it makes such an immediate difference to their well-being and to their voice.

'For violinists, holding the instrument doesn't have to be contorted. The problem is that when we think we have to lift something, we tend to do so by leaning backwards. This is the problem with all instruments that have to be lifted. You lift it by sticking your shoulders out – that gives you a hyperextended back and violinists, although they're not supposed to, often squeeze the violin with their chins. Then you have a rotation forwards toward the left, or backwards that can lock the left shoulder and causes problems in the forearm and hands. The other problem is the bow arm, when you pull it forwards from the shoulder rather than letting the bow lead the arm. I think it's useful to learn to think of the violin supported by the spine going up, rather than back and down. Although the head is in a particular position, it can still be free; there is no clenching of the jaw and the throat; and of course the breathing is improved. Breathing is just as important for the sound of the violin as it is for the singer in terms of ease and resonance.'

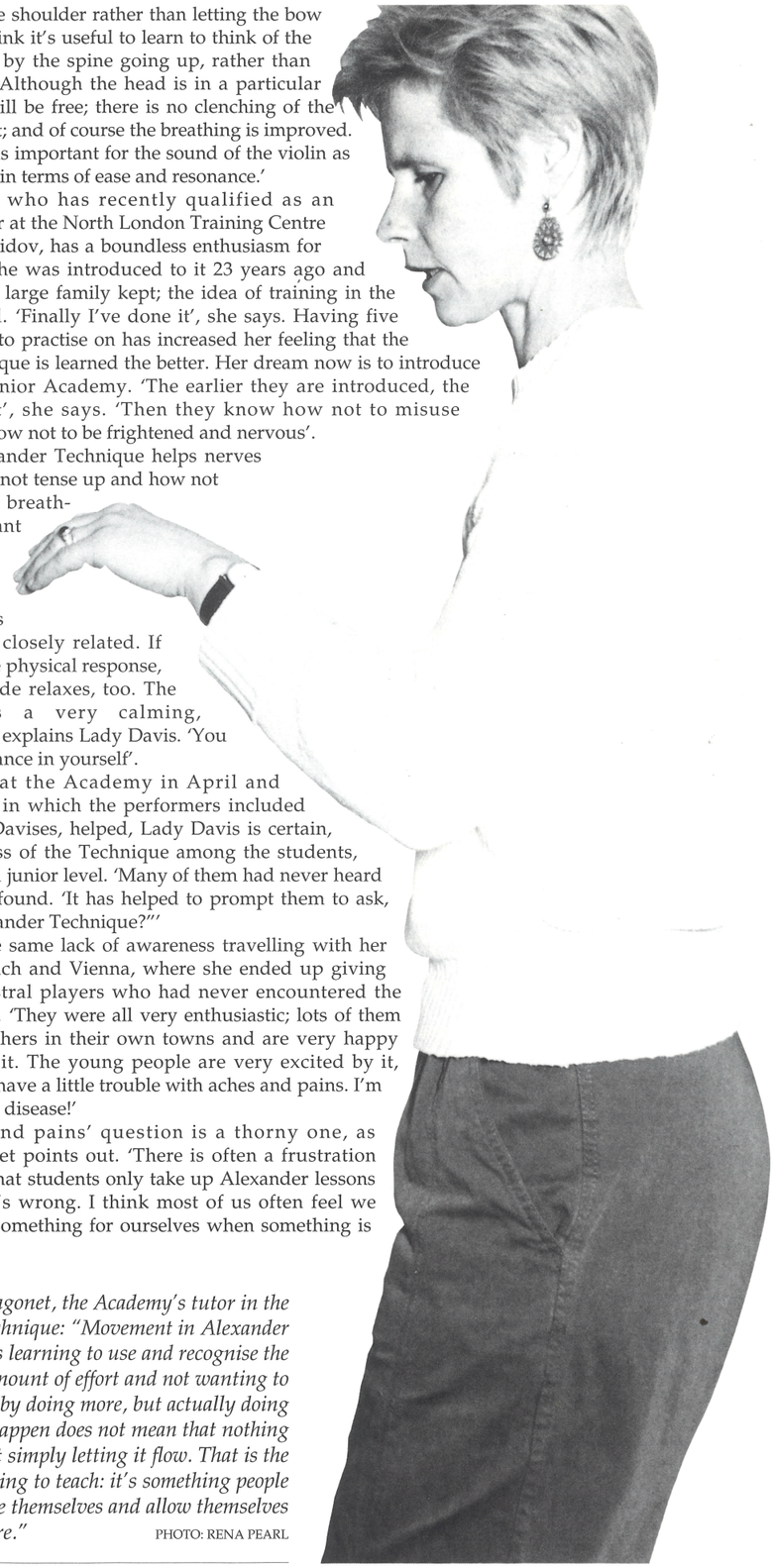
Lady Davis, who has recently qualified as an Alexander teacher at the North London Training Centre with Mischa Magidov, has a boundless enthusiasm for the Technique. She was introduced to it 23 years ago and while raising her large family kept; the idea of training in the back of her mind. 'Finally I've done it', she says. Having five musical children to practise on has increased her feeling that the earlier the Technique is learned the better. Her dream now is to introduce lessons to the Junior Academy. 'The earlier they are introduced, the better the result', she says. 'Then they know how not to misuse themselves and how not to be frightened and nervous'.

Yes, the Alexander Technique helps nerves as well. Learning not tense up and how not to constrict your breathing is an important battle in combatting nerves, for body and mind here, as everywhere, are closely related. If you can tackle the physical response, the mental attitude relaxes, too. The Technique has a very calming, 'collecting' effect, explains Lady Davis. 'You feel more of a balance in yourself'.

The concert at the Academy in April and further concerts, in which the performers included next-generation Davises, helped, Lady Davis is certain, to raise awareness of the Technique among the students, both at senior and junior level. 'Many of them had never heard of it before', she found. 'It has helped to prompt them to ask, "what is the Alexander Technique?"'

She found the same lack of awareness travelling with her husband to Munich and Vienna, where she ended up giving lessons to orchestral players who had never encountered the Technique before. 'They were all very enthusiastic; lots of them went to find teachers in their own towns and are very happy with the idea of it. The young people are very excited by it, especially if they have a little trouble with aches and pains. I'm spreading it like a disease!'

The 'aches and pains' question is a thorny one, as Dorothea Magonet points out. 'There is often a frustration among teachers that students only take up Alexander lessons when something's wrong. I think most of us often feel we only need to do something for ourselves when something is



Dorothea Magonet, the Academy's tutor in the Alexander Technique: "Movement in Alexander Technique means learning to use and recognise the appropriate amount of effort and not wanting to improve on that by doing more, but actually doing less. Letting it happen does not mean that nothing is happening, but simply letting it flow. That is the most difficult thing to teach: it's something people have to experience themselves and allow themselves to be free to explore." PHOTO: RENA PEARL

Lady Davis and the Alexander Fund

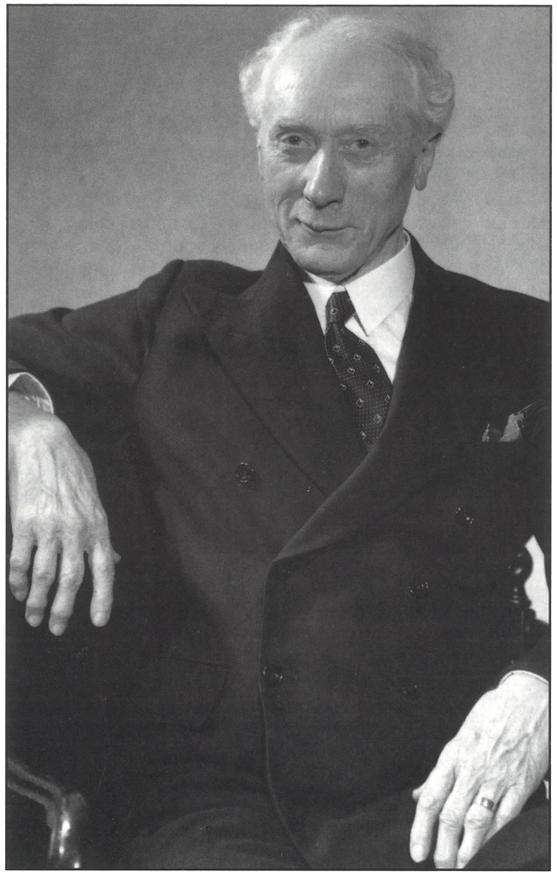
LADY DAVIS, whose husband Sir Colin Davis holds the International Chair of Conducting at the Academy, is herself a recently qualified Alexander teacher and is joining the Academy's Alexander staff. This year she has been working to establish a new fund at the Academy to support the provision of Alexander lessons for its students. On 29th April Sir Colin Davis conducted the RAM Symphony Orchestra for the first time in a special concert to raise money for the fund.

The list of contributors to the fund has been impressive, including not only Sir Colin Davis himself but also the Prince of Wales, Sir Georg Solti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Bernard Haitink, Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Dame Gwynneth Jones, Simon Rattle and Jose Carreras. Since the Academy began to provide Alexander Technique lessons nine years ago, demand has risen well beyond the number of available places, and the £5,000 which the concert raised, plus other generous contributions, will be devoted to providing a greater number of lessons.

F M Alexander was born in Tasmania in 1869. having survived a childhood beset by illness, he trained himself to become a Shakespearian reciter. Around the age of 25 he began to lose his voice, also suffering on stage from a distressing rasping sound in his breath. The advice of specialists, to rest the voice before going on stage, did not help. Finally he decided he must be misusing his own body in some way that affected his voice and breathing. Over nine years he examined his posture in the mirror, and found that he was retracting his head, stiffening, shortening and narrowing the spine and therefore thrusting his chest forward which made it immobile: this interfered with the larynx. His whole posture was completely off balance. Although he seemed to be correcting mistakes when he looked in the mirror, he would always find himself back where he started because he had established these patterns as habit.

The criteria he worked out were to keep his neck free, to let his head go forward and up and to let the spine lengthen and the back widen, and developed a way of working on himself using these principles. Eventually he discovered the pattern of misuse was no longer there when he was about to speak publicly, or, to a lesser extent, in normal speech and other activities. He went on to develop his method of working with other people on similar problems.

Alexander came to Britain just before the first world war and started his first training course. In the 1920s and 1930s he worked closely with Harley Street specialists, particularly on respiratory conditions. Thus he became known as 'The breathing man'.



not working properly. But sometimes we teachers feel we're treated like a pain clinic – the student has something wrong, they want it to be looked after quickly and they want to get on with their practising. I think that's where a lot of re-education has to happen. Sometimes we have students who come along when something's wrong, they come for five lessons and when it's better they disappear again.' Although the Alexander Technique can help specific injuries in the long term, it is usually advisable to see a doctor, osteopath, physiotherapist etc, for treatment of painful injuries. Alexander's effects are more subtle and certainly longer-term.

In fact the optimum number of lessons to notice a difference is about 25, depending on the student – and between lessons the battle is to remember constantly the principles you are learning instead of falling back into slouches and hunches the minute you walk out of your teacher's door. After the first 25 lessons or so, a student would usually have occasional refresher lessons, to keep up the good work.

When you go for an Alexander lesson, you find that much depends on something like a 'laying on of hands'. 'It's got to have "the touch",' as Lady Davis puts it – 'it's the language of the hands, their ability to make you aware of your body and the excess tension'. It feels gentle and reassuring – although now and then the awareness that you have hardly been breathing can cause a temporary sense of breathing too much! The teacher will usually start working with the student standing up, then in a chair, getting up and sitting down. Part of the lesson is spent lying on a flat surface in the 'semi-supine' position, back flat, knees bent up, feet flat on the table and hands resting quietly on the lower abdomen. The head is supported by a few books built to the right height for each student. This is the position that you are advised to practise at home every day for at least ten minutes (and doing that does make a difference).

Movement in Alexander Technique, in the words of Dorothea Magonet, means 'learning to use and recognise the appropriate amount of effort and not wanting to improve on that by doing more, but actually doing less. Letting it happen does not mean that nothing is happening, but simply letting it flow. That is the most difficult thing to teach: it's something people have to experience themselves and allow themselves to be free to explore.'

For a list of private teachers and information on teacher training please send a stamped addressed envelope to:

The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, 20 London House, 266 Fulham Road, London SW10 9EL; Tel 071 351 0828; Fax 071 352 1556.

Jessica Duchen is a freelance writer and journalist who is currently researching a book about the composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold

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The Academy's new Cavaillé-Col organ

Sir David Lumsden has been acting as consultant to the organ builders, van den Heuvel of Dordrecht. He describes the background to the commissioning of the organ

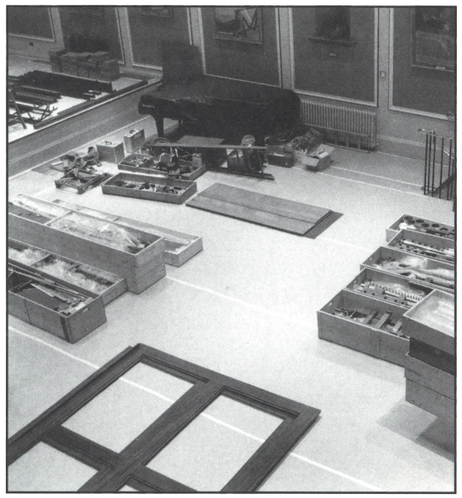
IN 1989 the Academy commissioned a new organ for the Duke's Hall and, during July and August, it was delivered and put in position by its builders, the Dutch firm of Jan L van den Huevel of Dordrecht. The organ is designed entirely in the style of the great nineteenth-century Parisian builder, Aristide Cavaillé-Col. Van den Heuvel is the world's leading expert on Cavaille-Col, as well as on the twentieth-century symphonic organ style.

The French symphonic organ, as developed and perfected by Cavaillé-Col, has been the inspiration of a whole tradition of organ playing and composition from Cesar Franck and Charles-Marie Widor to Olivier Messiaen, in our own time. Cavaillé-Col, working during the expansionist times of the Second Empire, produced over 500 instruments – to be found in the large churches of Paris, in many of the cathedrals of France and as far afield as Moscow, Rio de Janeiro and Manchester.

Although not a large concert instrument, the voicing of the Duke's Hall instrument is characteristic of the French symphonic style, full and strong. There is a unity and cohesion in the ensemble which make it ideal for use with orchestras (many concert organs, in spite of their size and completeness of specification, fail in this respect). The Duke's Hall organ, with its 'multum in parvo' design, generous pipework scaling and voicing that recognises the natural harmonic development of each pipe, can hold its own, yet blend well, with the largest orchestra. It is also an ideal partner for other smaller ensembles.

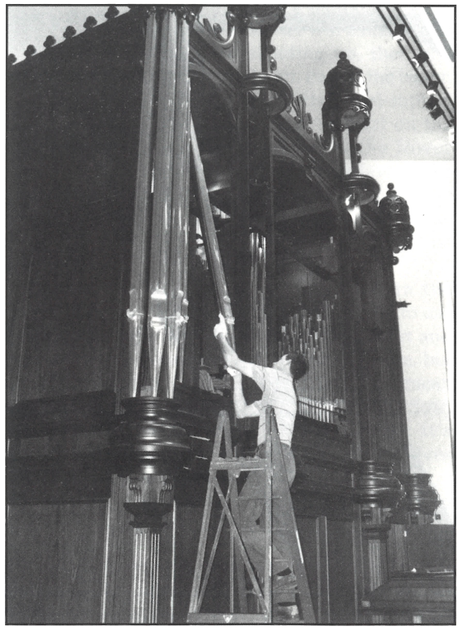
For Academy organ students the study and understanding of Baroque and contemporary styles have been immeasurably enhanced by regular contact with the 'classical' Rieger organ in Marylebone Church. The language and aesthetic of a very different repertoire will now be grasped more fully by students and teachers working together on our new 'romantic' Cavaillé-Col.

The resources which the Academy now offers organ students will enhance their training and develop their sensitivity to the subtleties of different styles of writing and playing. It will, we also hope, develop an awareness of the French musical tradition and culture we all enjoy and which is an essential ingredient of any musician's education.



ORGANISED CHAOS
When the Academy emptied for the summer holidays, the Duke's Hall was filled with a thousand components. By the new term, all the bits had been resolved into the mahogany splendour of the new Cavaillé-Col organ

PHOTOS: RITA CASTLE



Crowded life, uncrowded isles

Composer, arranger, orchestrator, church organist, tenor, copyist, journalist, fundraiser, marathon piano player and Orkney dweller. This is Clive Strutt

A FEATURE of living in thinly-peopled areas too remote to function as dormitories for cities is the wearing of many occupational hats. There are accordingly a number of strands comprising the texture of my musical life in Orkney. Composing, arranging and orchestrating are, for me, the most important of these, and divide into creative work done for personal expression and that done for the community's benefit.

In the world of composition competitions I have been lucky in winning prizes on three occasions. In the 1987 competition organised by the Dr William Baird Ross Trust for Scottish Church Music I won second prize with a five-minute anthem The White Island, and in its 1990 competition my Glastonbury Carol (SATB) won third prize. The Trust organised performances of the pieces in Dunfermline and Edinburgh respectively. In 1986 I won first prize (The Carolan Award) in the Celtic Harp Festival at Dinan, in Brittany, with a set of variations on two ancient Irish melodies, which I called Hibernian Rhapsody. As a result I accepted the invitation to attend the 1987 competition as a juror. The Hibernian Rhapsody was published in Paris by Harposphere in 1988, publication being a facet of the award.

Away from competitions, my Symphony No 7 The Athonite, a symphonic impression of my experiences during the first of two visits made to the Holy Community of Mount Athos in Greece, still lies unfinished amongst a mass of other partially completed works, awaiting the right combination of time, creative energy and inspiration for completion. The premiere of my Piano Sonata No 3 was given locally on 4th November 1992 by Derek Bell (dare I mention a former RCM student!) along with a selection of rarely heard works by such neglected composers as Sorabji, Scott and Godowski.

Examples of creative work done for the community are orchestral arrangements made for the Orkney Orchestra. The first of these was Phoebe Thomson's Cakewalk by Sadie Koniinsky, performed in the 1992 St Magnus Festival, and repeated as an encore. Others yet to be heard are orchestrations of Erik Satie's Waltz "Je te veux", a scherzoso by Max Reger and my own Byzantine Suite in the Ottoman Style based entirely on material culled from a rare scholarly treatise on Byzantine music discovered in an Oxford bookshop.

A neighbour, by chance a former RAM student Christina Sargent, who retired form a professional orchestral oboe career to do farming and craftwork but who still dons musical hats herself on occasion, owns the only cor Anglais in Orkney! I happily obliged with a Suite on Orkney Folksongs for this most beautiful instrument with string trio when asked to provide a piece for her new group.

The musical performers' hats I wear are those of church organist, and separately of amateur chorister. None of South Ronaldsay's five stillfunctioning Church of Scotland buildings has a proper organ, merely harmoniums, mostly defective, wheezy and ancient, apart from a fine twomanual "University Organ", in St Margaret's Church. Although a harmonium, it is in good condition, and enables some variety of tone and volume to be obtained.

My wife Jill sings alto, and I sing tenor in "The Mayfield Singers", a chamber choir formed by local accountant and amateur musician Neil Price. As a composer I have found it beneficial to sing in a small "a cappella" choir, as I have a much better idea of what it is reasonable to ask of singers when at the sharp end (forgive the pun!).

There are three other musical hats occasionally donned by me: those of copyist, musical journalist and fundraiser. As a former professional copyist it is no problem to prepare my own material, either for performance, competitions, or archives. Occasionally I am asked to prepare performing material for other local musicians.

The musical journalist's hat is normally donned every June when the local paper needs more reviewers than it can usually get to cover events in the festival, a mix of musical and literary performances by both local amateurs and important professionals.

The rarest musical hat is that of one-off fundraiser. A public enquiry into a European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant for plutonium at Dounreay was being held in Thurso, and for a few days in Kirkwall, and to help raise funds for the Campaign Against Dounreay Expansion I organised a piano-playing marathon in the shape of a performance of Erik Satie's "Vexations", that curiosity (but admirable for marathons) consisting of 840 repetitions of one page of music, and lasting 24 hours. Stretching from Friday to Saturday evening it used seven pianists, plus helpers. My own share of playing amounted to seven hours. Although the audience was very small, I did obtain personal sponsorship of over ú600 by writing to dozens of composers country-wide as well as to friends and relations.

And what of the future?

We grouse about the weather here, and the climate's rather limiting effects on the environment have always seemed to me to be the most likely source of dissatisfaction liable to result in a decision to remove elsewhere.

We did move away once, but returned, repelled by suburban drabness and attracted by the magnetic magic of island peace and beauty!

Clive Strutt is a former Royal Academy student

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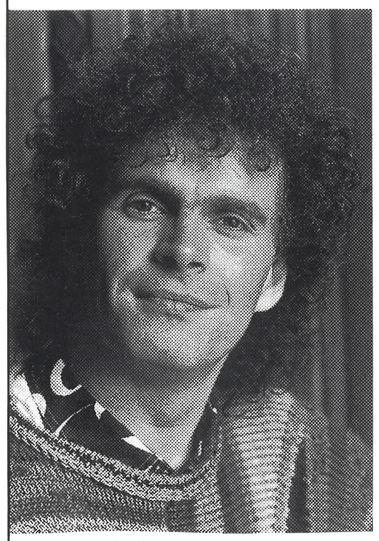

SIMON RATTLE
Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

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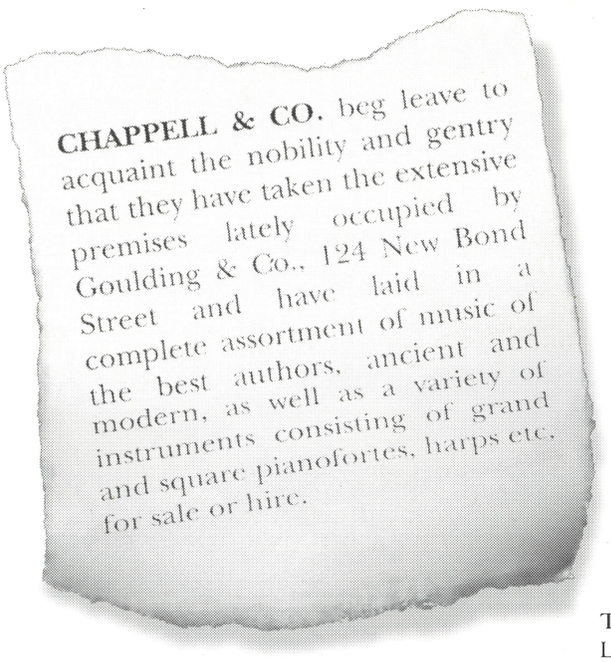
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